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SENSITIVE
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TAGS: PHUM PGOV CASC PREL ET
SUBJECT: LUCY CLAIMS ASYLUM

SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) In a move that shocked the paleo-human rights community, Lucy -- the 3.2 million year old hominid fossil discovered in rural Ethiopia in 1974 -- claimed asylum in Seattle during the second leg of her North American tour. The move has illuminated socio-political dynamics among our ancestors and taken a political tone within the diaspora while also illuminating cultural quirks of twenty-first century American society.

POLITICAL OVERTONES

¶2. (SBU) Immediately upon issuing her asylum plea, Lucy became a cause celebre among the politically restive Ethiopian Diaspora who immediately began using the move for its own anti-government ends. Within hours the blogosphere erupted with comment. Dr. Hailu Hailu Hailu, President of the Washington State chapter of the Alliance for the Liberation of Ethiopia said, "Lucy is proof of the Ethiopian government's mistreatment...when she got off the plane in the U.S., she was just a skeleton!" In a breaking news interview with Voice of America, the Ethiopian Ambassador said "whatever she said, she's lying." Hominid Rights Watch (HRW) posted a statement on its website noting "If she is saying that the Ethiopian government mistreated her, we support her."

A BARE BONES ACCOUNT

¶3. (SBU) While Lucy has attained global renown -- the first Ethiopian to adopt the Indonesian practice of going by a single name -- relatively little is known about her early years. Now that she has discovered language, however, Lucy is eager to share her story. "America truly is the land of hope and opportunity," she stated at a Starbucks store in Portland recently. "In a gesture of primate-hominid solidarity, a gorilla named Coco taught me to sign. Now, I can finally tell my story!" And telling her story she is...Lucy signed a deal with Scholastic Press for a biography to be ghost written by Kitty Kelly entitled "The Skinny on Lucy" to be released before the Christmas season.

¶4. (SBU) In an exclusive interview with Mother Jones' Bones magazine, Lucy shed some light on her tail. "When they assumed power in 3.2 million B.C., the Australopithecus Hominids' Liberation Front (AHLF) were brutal. They taunted us and called us 'primitive.' One of them singled me out, depriving me of food for what felt like a million years, until I was just ... bones. We tried to resist, but finally we were driven underground. But, still they walked all over us. Nevertheless, every few hundred millennia, I would poke my head out to see if the climate was more hospitable to stand up for proto-humans' rights. One day, I tried to speak

out, but this *Australopithecus robustus* took my mandible. Still, *Homo habilis* were the worst. They taunted me constantly with those opposable thumbs. First they would scatter a few vertebra here and there, but once they took my femur I could stand no more. I loved what Ethiopia used to be; I left my heart in Ethiopia. Actually, I left most of my body there."

CELEBRITY ATTENTION AND ADJUSTMENT CHALLENGES

¶ 15. (SBU) Since Lucy's asylum claim became public, she has received significant public attention as well as outreach of many kinds from various celebrities. On NPR's Morning Edition, Dr. Donald Johanson said, "What have I done? When I first encountered Lucy, she was raving something wild. I just thought she was just hopped up on khat, so I named her after this groovy tune on the radio. Had I only known what she has been through, I would have named her something more empowering, like Aretha." In a short-lived business endeavor, the dining chain TGI Friday's offered Lucy a role in a television commercial. Despite stressing that she "needed the bones," she turned the offer down noting, "I love the food, but it goes right through me."

¶ 16. (SBU) In a trying visit to Los Angeles, Lucy also found difficulty. "Walking down Rodeo Drive, Ms. MacLain kept asking me if I was sure we hadn't met before, while the self-styled king of pop kept offering to buy me," Lucy vented. "I went to Disneyland, hoping to get cheered up, but seeing those intact skeletons in the Pirates of the Caribbean ride just made me more depressed." "I've never been religious," Lucy admitted, "having been born well before we had religion. But, in an attempt to find solace, I visited a

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church. I ran into a group in the basement who greeted me with cheers when I said 'Hi, I'm Lucy.' Turns out the AA sign on the door did not stand for *Australopithecus Aferensis!*" "I finally felt at home in San Francisco," Lucy said. "The music is great, but I'm torn between the Oldies, Bob Geldof, and the Grateful Dead."

COMMENT AND ACTION REQUEST

¶ 17. (SBU) Lucy stressed to PolOff that the trauma of being unearthed, then locked in a museum box for 24 years, only to be subjected to public gawking and political jockeying has left her feeling like a "picked over carcass." Post will continue to try to flesh out further details on Lucy's story and dig up any other skeletons in Ethiopia's proverbial closet. Still, in light of the fragility of this unique situation, Post requests that DRL and OES deploy a paleo-asylum review team to review Lucy's case.

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